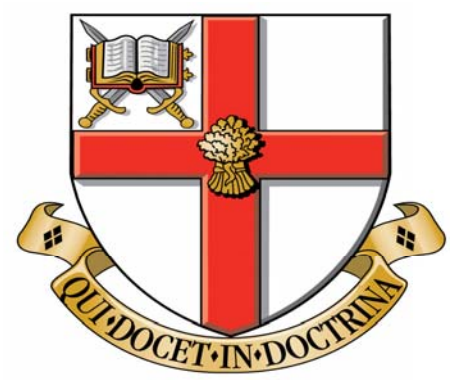

ANTI-JUDAISM IN THE GOSPEL TRIAL NARRATIVES: CAN THE NARRATIVES BE READ IN A WAY THAT IS NOT ANTI-JEWISH ?

GERTRAUD FRIEDA LOUISE WRIGHT

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to explore the issue of anti-Judaism in the Gospel Trial Narratives, and to question whether the text can be read in a way that is not anti-Jewish. Since many scholars argue that anti-Judaism is not found in the gospels but originates from the teachings of the Church Fathers, I persue this matter in chapter one. In an historical overview from the post-biblical period to the present, I scrutinize the role which the Church Fathers assigned to the Jews, that is placing the blame for the death of Jesus Christ solely on the Jews, thus initiating Christian hatred and persecution of the Jews for centuries to come.

The second and more extensive part focuses on the Trial narratives and investigates the view of scholars that the roots of anti-Judaism are found in the gospels. These views are contrasted with others who dismiss these allegations. The first section deals with the arrest of Jesus, and with Jewish involvement. The next section treats of the Jewish trial and the conflicting issue of Christology. The Roman trial in section three explores whether the Roman governor or the Jewish leaders bear the greater responsibility for Jesus' death.

In this investigation I probe how far the Trial narratives are anti-Jewish, and question whether theology rather than history controls the text, and how tensions and conflicts can be understood if seen in a sociohistorical, political and cultural context. The reinterpetation of the narratives by modern scholars, Christian and Jewish, offers new insight into the texts, and largely affirms my theory that the Trial narratives can indeed be read in a way that is not anti-Jewish.

In the concluding chapter, I investigate the needs of contemporary readers with their prejudice and presuppositions to gain a well-informed understanding of the gospels. Next, from a post-Holocaust position, I consider the pervasive influence of anti-Judaism on Christian culture, and how recent changes in church teaching, in liturgy, and prayer, seek to correct distorted teachings. I further notice the positive efforts made to overcome the presistent anti-Jewish influence in literature and art, as seen in the recent Oberammergau Passion play with the excision of large parts of anti-Jewish elements. A brief investigation of Gospels Passion stories for children witnesses pro-Jewish attitudes emerging. Finally, I examine how the beneficial effect of a Christian-Jewish dialogue fosters mutual understanding, which is, as I learnt at my recent visit to Germany, of particular importance for the German Lutheran Church with its special needs of renewal, and how Christian-Jeewish dialogue promotes co-operation and Christian recognition of the Jewishness of Jesus and the Jewishness of the scriptures.

Declaration

"The work is original and has not been submitted previously in support of any qualification or course".

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signed

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List of Abbreviations

CCJ The Council of Christians and Jews
ICCJ The International Council for Christians and Jews
WCC World Council of Churches

Illustrations

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INTRODUCTION

> Antisemitism is seen as a Christian phenomenon par excellence... (It) has been endemic throughout European history. Its causes have been classified as religious, economic, social and cultural, but it is essentially a vicious psychological syndrome.... It turned the Jewish comunity into the archetypal scapegoat for all sorts of ills. (N. Davies, 1996, 197, 840)

Virulent anti-semitism is still endemic in many countries. This has been seen in riots in Russia, where, according to BBC reports in February and in July 1999, groups of Blackshirts were said to be marching unhindered through the streets of Moscow, accusing the Jews of genocide of the Russian people, and demanding that they be rounded-up and thrown into prison. James Parkes claims that the Russians were indoctrinated with hatred and contempt for Jews for even longer than the Germans, and that such ancient prejudices cannot suddenly be eliminated. Parkes traces anti-Semitism in Christian countries unequivocally to the Church's teachings. He censures the Church for presenting the Jews 'as villains, full of falsehood, and revelling in every vice", and for preaching this 'from every pulpit throughout the breadth of Christendom Sunday by Sunday, century by century, until ordinary Christians came to believe this falsehood' (1963, 63). Parkes' view is shared by a number of theologians. Paul van Buren declares that 'the Church has done great harm to itself...by leading the world in anti-Jewishness' (1987, 330), Helen Fry asserts that 'the Holocaust is the consummation of centuries of false teaching and practice by the Churches' (1996, 40), and Rosemary Ruether claims that 'the roots of even secular Christian hatred of Jews... lie in Christianity' .., and that 'genocide was a consequence of Christian theological teaching' (1993, 54f).

A tentative acknowledgment of such charges came, in 1977, from the World Council of Churches stating that 'in the Christian tradition and its use of Scripture and liturgy there are ideas and attitudes toward Judaism and Jews that consciously or unconsciously translate into prejudice and discrimination against Jews' (Baybrooke, 1992, 12). A Church of Scotland report in 1985, quite rightly, links the attitudes and prejudices cultivated by Christendom with the Holocaust. It is these attitudes and prejudices that provided the pretext for the Nazis to persecute the Jews, so that Hitler was able to claim that 'he was putting into effect what Christianity had preached and practised for two thousand years' (Saperstein, 1989,40).

Parkes and other writers have criticised the churches for the slow progress in acknowledging their role in creating anti-Jewish prejudice. The brief details below indicate how, after the war, many churches were quick in condemning anti-Semitism, but have since been painstakingly slow in acknowledging any guilt, which seems to suggest a reluctance of churches to revise their traditional doctrines and teachings.

In 1948, the WCC showed an awareness of Jewish suffering, but no hint of any Christian responsibility for this misery. In 1961, it declared that the Jewish people of today are not to be blamed for the crucifixion; in 1968, that the suffering of Jews during the ages was not proof of any guilt on their part, but that Christians had a hand in much of Jewish suffering. In 1969, the Lutheran World Federation expressed its anguish over its 'deep and tragic involvement', and the American Lutheran Church acknowledged that 'Lutherans bear a special responsibility... because the Nazi movement found a climate of hatred already in existence. In 1982, the WCC affirmed that the Christian doctrine has led to the persecution of the Jews, and that its teachings proved a spawning ground for the evils of the Nazi Holocaust (Baybrooke, 1990, 27f).

Since Vatican II, the Catholic Church has sought to remove misunderstandings and expressions of anti-Semitism from its teachings. Jews are not to be presented as rejected or accursed by God, and the death of Christ is not to be charged against all the Jews nor against the Jews of today. Jones (1997, 15) criticises that there was no recognition of Christian responsibility for Jewish suffering.

Some tangible development has, however , taken place since the mid-1980s. The Presbyterian Church (USA), expressed its repentance on the church's long and deep complicity in the proliferation of anti-Jewish attitudes' (Saperstein, 1989, 52). The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Robert Runcie, in his 1988 Kristallnacht Memorial address acknowledged Christianity's guilt:

> The travesty of Kristallnacht and all that followed is that so much was perpetrated in Christ's name. To glorify the Third Reich, the Christian faith was betrayed. The slaughter of the Jews was a desecration of the ministry of Jesus, himself a Jew. Neither inside nor outside Germany did the churches recognize this. And even today there are many Christians who fail to see it as self-evident. And why the blindness? Because for centuries Christians have held Jews collectively responsible for the death of Jesus... Without the poisoning of Christian minds through centuries, the Holocaust is unthinkable' (Baybrooke, 1990, 90).

In 1991, Pope John II rejected the deicide charge, and he called for an act of *teshuvah* (repentance), and in March 2000, during his visit to Israel, the Pope said a prayer at the Western Wall asking for forgiveness for sins against the Jews (see photo after p. 29).

My personal interest in examining the roots of anti-Semitism derives from my experience in early youth. I grew up in the 1930s in North Germany and witnessed the effect of persecution on the large Jewish community in my home town. In 1933, I saw the boycott of Jewish shops, then some doctors emigrated, and after the *Kristallnacht,* when Jewish shops and the synagogue were destroyed, Jews had to wear the David star, and later we heard that the Jews were transported to the East, ostensibly to work on the land. My schooling at a Protestant

girls' school which was also attended by Jewish girls, seemed largely protected by outside influence until, in 1938, politically appointed teachers arrived. They taught us that our beloved poets, musicians, and scientists were no longer Germans but Jews and had to be rejected. Our Jewish girls began to be victimized, until one day, they all disappeared. After the war we heard that they had joined the Kindertransport to England. My family also felt the impact of anti-Jewish regulations. Some of my Jewish cousins left for Palestine, and others were not allowed to marry their Jewish financés. At church, Jesus was no longer considered a Jew. It has since been questioned whether the Holocaust could have been avoided, if churches had preached that Jesus was a Jew, and if parsons had worn the David Star instead of the Cross. This argument is apposite in view of the achievement in Berlin of a group of Christian women, married to Jews, who marched to the Chancellery where an apparently terrified Hitler ordered these couples, including my relatives, to be moved to the East end of Berlin where, forgotten, they survived the war.

Scholars are divided as to the roots of anti-Judaism. Many argue that anti-Jewish hostilities are not found in the gospels but originate from the teachings of the Church Fathers. Therefore, in chapter one, I explore the role which the Church Fathers assigned to the Jews in the death of Jesus Christ, and probe how their polemics initiated Christian hatred and persecution of the Jews. Although the amount of relevant literature is vast, space is limited, so I have to restrict my inquiry to a brief overview of the history of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism from the early Church to the present.

The second more extensive chapter treats of the Trial narratives, examining the claim that the roots of anti-Judaism are found in the gospels. Section one explores how far the Jews are responsible for the arrest of Jesus, in the following section the issue of Christology is explored, and section three examines the extent of Roman and of Jewish responsibility for Jesus' death. As I want to find out whether the text can be read in a way that is not anti-Jewish, I am asking whether theology rather than history govern the text, and am applying textual hermeneutics.

In the final chapter, I investigate how contemporary readers, influenced by centuries of anti-Jewish hostilities, can understand the gospels in a positive way. I probe how modern reinterpretations of the scriptures correct previous misunderstandings, how church teachings and liturgies are being purged of anti-Judaism, and how Passion plays are corrected. A brief survey of children's Gospel stories reveals the attitudes displayed towards Jews and Judaism. Finally, Jewish-Christian dialogue shows how Christian attitudes toward Jews have improved, particularly in the Lutheran church in Germany, and how the emphasis is now on the Jewishness of Jesus, and on the Jewishness of the gospel narratives.

The research methods which I use: from a post-Holocaust position, I review the Trial narratives, applying textual exegesis, and using different kinds of hermeneutics. Conventional interpretations are compared with modern interpretations, which challenge interpretations that were held to be authoritative. This raises the hermeneutical problem of contextuality, interpreting one cultural text within its context to apply to our cultural context. The modern understanding of the text largely affirms the thesis of this paper, that the Trial narratives can be interpreted in a way that is not anti-Jewish.

Defining terms: in this paper, I follow Guelich (1993, 80)), Gager and others, and use the term anti-Judaism narrowly defined for religious and theological disagreements. The term anti-Semitism is used for racial prejudice based on nineteenth century racial theories, which means that the Gospels cannot be antisemitic. However, when I quote scholars, such as Sandmel, Berkovitz and others who use this expression in the broadest sense which includes negation of Judaism, I do not change the text.

Quotations from the Bible are from the *New Revised Standard Version* unless otherwise indicated.

1.1.0 ANTI-JUDAISM and ANTI-SEMITISM from the post-biblical period to the present

In this chapter, I investigate the view of scholars who maintain that anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism has its roots in the writings of the early Church Fathers and of later generations, but has no basis in the Scriptures. Gregory Baum, for example, states unequivocally that 'there is no foundation for the accusation that a seed of contempt and hatred for Jews can be found in the New Testament' (Jones, 1997, 4). In his view, anti-Jewish feelings were the product of the post-biblical period, a standpoint shared by Sheerin, and Vawter. Pursuing this view, I examine how through the centuries the Christian accusation that the Jews crucified Jesus has resulted in fierce hostility and persecution of the Jews, leading to the Holocaust. For want of space, this historical overview has to be brief, yet I shall dwell in some detail on the writings of the Church Fathers, because their teachings have been adopted and elaborated by Christians even in later centuries.

1.2 The second to the seventh centuries

In works such as the *Adversus Judaeos*, the Church Fathers produced harsh polemics against the Jewish people, castigating them for their many faults and for their blindness in not recognizing that Jesus was the Messiah. The resulting controversies between Christians and Jews arose because of their different understanding of the Messiah, an issue that is still with us and is treated in chapter two. The most serious and far-reaching accusation which Christians have made against Jews for two millenia is the charge that the Jews crucified the Messiah (Klein, 1978, 92), an indictment that sanctified violent anti-Jewish hostilities. I am turning to the Church Fathers and to the role they assigned to the Jews for the death of Jesus.

1.1.3 The death of Jesus the Messiah

Tertullian considered the dispersion of the Jews a just punishment for the murder of Jesus Christ, the true Messiah. Eusebius thought that the Temple was destroyed as a punishment for the 'murderous killing of the Lord', and Justin that the downfall of the Jews and their exile was a just retribution, saying 'it is right and just that these things have happened to you for you killed the Righteous One' (Lampe, 1984, 168). Against the Jewish charge that a man crucified could not be the Messiah, Justin advances the Christian claim that the Scriptures point to Christ... that he was the Messiah promised to Israel...and that they, the Jews, had crucified him (McDonald, 1993, 230). Melito went further, being the first to accuse the Jewish people of the ultimate crime of deicide, 'You have slain your Lord... God has been murdered... the King of Israel has been slain' (Saperstein, 1989, 5). The deicide charge was reiterated by the early church, the Dominicans, the old Luther, and the churches up to the 1990s. This is how two Church Fathers expressed the church's position on the Jews: Chrysostom accused the Jewish people of being the 'killers of the Lord', who 'crucified the

Son', and were 'possessed by demons', he called them monsters... that had become worse than wild beasts, and 'sacrificed their sons and daughters to devils'. He even proposed that the Jews, having rejected Christ, deserved to be killed (Michael, 1994, 114). In a probably unhistoric passage which Michael thinks could have served as a Good Friday liturgy, Jerome, criticized the Jews, "Christ is saying, 'My enemies are the Jews, they conspired in hatred against Me, crucified Me, heaped evils..on me, blasphemed Me'" (ibid 112). In another passage, Jerome introduced the identification of all Jews with Judas and the immoral use of money, saying 'Judas betrayed Me, the Jews persecuted and crucified Me...Judas is cursed...the Jews may be cursed' (ibid 112) (see 2.1.7). Such vilification of the Jews has been emulated by Christians from the Middle Ages to the present, as seen below.

Augustine , the most influential of the Fathers, devised the thesis of the Witness people, arguing that although the Jews rejected the Messiah, they were punished, and should be preserved and serve as a witness and living proof to the truth of the Christian faith. Augustine's plea, 'slay them not... (Ps. 59.12), became official church doctrine, its influence lasted into modern times. There is, however, irony in Moses Mendelssohn's praise of Augustine for declaring that God was preserving the Jews as a visible proof of the Nazarine religion, when he says, 'but for this lovely brainwave, we would have been exterminated long ago' (Saperstein, 1989, 9).

1.1.4 The attraction of Judaism

Since many Christians found Judaism more attractive than Christianity, Chrysostom saw it necessary to warn the people not to convert to Judaism, and not to attend Jewish festivals, least of all the Passover, for 'to be with the Jews on the day they murdered Jesus was an insult to Christ', emphasizing the enormity of their crimes, 'the Jews... crucified Christ and blaspheme him to this day' (McDonald, 1993, 241).

1.1.5 Rhetorical language

The potent language used by the early writers was not confined to Christians but was used throughout the ancient world. Michael (1994, 111) argues that the language, which strikes us as harsh, was in Judaism tolerable religious rhetoric, designed to shock and revive. The polemics of the Church Fathers was often as much an attack on the opponents as a defence of its own truthfulness, for example, Justin's vituperative language was more for Christian consumption than for the Jews, and Chrysostom's polemics against the Jews were also meant for Christians but for encouragement. For this paper, it is important to realize that from the eighth until the twentieth century, the great preachers' homilies against the Jews, were considered among the greatest examples of rhetoric, and were used in Christian schools and seminaries where priests were taught to preach and to hate the Jews. Fortunately, attitudes are changing. Harkins (in Michael, 1994, 114) writes that Chrysostom's anti-Jewish theological

position is no longer tenable, he cannot be excused for his antisemitic remarks, even if he is the product of his times.

1.2.1 THE MIDDLE AGES

I explore how Jesus' death enables Christians to justify the persecution of the Jews. The first crusade began massacres on a large scale. The crusaders' primary motive was the annihilation of the Jews as revenge for the crucifixion, hence the ferocity of the attacks (Schweitzer, 1994, 137). At Rouen and in the Rhenish cities, the crusaders' vindication of their actions was that Jews lived amongst them whose forefathers 'slew (Jesus) and crucified him..' (Saperstein, 1989, 17). In subsequent crusades, the attacks seemed less vicious, but heavy financial burdens were placed on the Jews, who thus subsidized the crusades. Christian hostility was not only for religious, but also for economic and financial reasons. Princes and priests sought to rid themselves of their debt often by unfair means, as in York, where after the massacre in 1190, the debtors went to York Minster to destroy the Jewish contracts. The Black Monks, indebted to the Jews, hated them 'who reject... the sacraments... let their lives be spared, their money be taken away' (Moore, 1992, 47), and Peter Venerable, having pawned the chalices of Cluny, dehumanized the Jews, calling them monstrous animals and brute beasts.

Religious reforms increased anti-Judaism. Innocent III taught that Jews were Christ-killers, and the concept of Jewish guilt for the death of Christ became canon law. Anselm of Laon, repudiating Augustine's doctrine, declared that the Crucifixion arose not through ignorance but from a deliberate rejection of Christ, and that the murder of Christ was intentional. (Saperstein, 1989, 23).

1.2.2 Creation of Myths

Myths were created that demonized the Jews. In 1144, when a boy was murdered, the Jews of Norwich were accused not just of the murder, but for ritually enacting the crucifixion. Similar cases were reported afterwards in many areas, and on the Continent, and one case in Eastern Europe even after the Holocaust (Saperstein, 1989, 21). Ordinary people came to believe that Jews crucified children, consumed their blood, and spread the plague by poisoning wells. The Black monks accused Jews of demonology, and of ritual murder. They developed a picture of the Jews as the blaspheming and sacrilegious enemy of Christ (Moore, 1992, 89). In iconography, particularly in the Renaissance, the Jews were shown with diabolic features, and with a hooked nose, as for example in the Passion cycle of Bosch (see photo on the next page). Such images were used by the Nazis in their antisemitic publications. Many of these myths still seem to be kept alive through art and literature (see 3.1.3).

"Christ Carrying the Cross" (ca 1450 - 1516)

Hieronymous Bosch Museeum voor Schone Kunsten, Ghent

1.2.3 The Spanish Inquisition

The Inquisition, instituted by the papacy against heretics, placed political and social pressure on the Jews to convert. Some bishops asserted that those 'baptised in Christ... all are one in Jesus Christ' (Galatians 3:27-28), yet the notion spread of the purity of blood', and that baptism could not purge Jewish origin. For the first time, Judaism was defined by race, an idea which the Nazis substantiated. A new papal Inquisition had thousands of *marranos* burnt at the stake. These harsh measures also affected the Jews. The church's defence for intolerance toward the Jews was because of alleged eucharistic Host desecration by the Jews.

1.3.1 THE REFORMATION

The Reformation seemed to augur well for the Jews. Luther in his tract *That Jesus was born a Jew* encouraged Christians to study the Hebrew Scriptures and to use the Talmud in Hebrew to interpret the Bible, in contrast to the Dominicans who prohibited its use, arguing that the Jews had killed Jesus the Messiah, and indeed God. When, however, the old Luther was reviled as a Judaizer, and the Jews refused to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah, he expressed his wrath in the tract *On the Jews and their Lies,* accusing the Jews of being bloodthirsty, vindictive, children of the devil, and proposed that they be persecuted, and their synagogues and houses be destroyed. Luther's tract, refuted by the Lutheran church, sank into oblivion, until rediscovered by the Nazis who not only implemented his plan in the Kristallnacht 1938, but went far beyond it. Martin Brecht rightly says that Luther's misguided polemics had the result that he became one of the 'Church Fathers', providing material for the modern hatred of Jews (1990, 349).

Johann Eck, Luther's fierce opponent, accused the Jews of atrocities, alleging that 'they murder our children, kill our adults... blaspheme Christ...' (Bagchi, 1992,253). Eck put into effect the decree of Innocent III: the Jews to remain indoors during Passion week, to wear a distinguishing badge, to be excluded from all professions, be slaves of Christians, until they acknowledge the true Messiah. Moreover, in 1555, Pope Paul IV established the first ghetto in Rome.

The popes of the counter-reformation initiated a new policy: Jews were to be converted, not gently as Augustine had argued, but brought to the font by *flagella tribulationum.* (Stow, 1992, 242).

1.3.2. The Enlightenment

The Enlightenment created a new kind of society where Christians and Jews were to live together on an equal footing. The Prussian king invited rich Jewish traders to settle in Prussia

and said 'jeder darf nach seiner Fasson selig werden'. For the first time, Jews and Christians could engage in debate. Lavater, a fanatical Christian, challenged the Jewish philosopher in Berlin, Moses Meldelssohn. The latter, tolerant in religious matters, acknowledged the innocence of Jesus and his moral goodness, but insisted that Jesus never tried to pass himself off as a divine person. Mendelssohn condemned the Sanhedrin, yet pleaded that the Jews should not forever be called to account for the wrong committed by the Sadducees, and for the just or unjust verdicts delivered by his ancestors some 1,700 years ago (Schoeps, 1963, 95). Mendelssohn's hope came to fruition when Vatican II and the WCC acknowledged that the death of Jesus cannot be charged against all Jews, nor against the Jews of today.

Despite enlightened attitudes, hostility towards Jews continued. In a Prussian town, the citizens, frightened by the large influx of Jewish traders, destroyed a synagogue, justifying their action because contempt for Christ had been taught therein, and in Nancy, minor clergy protested against the settlement of Jews 'the most mortal enemies of Jesus Christ' (Cohn-Sherbok, 1992, 116). Louis XVI said that hatred of the Jewish people exists in the hearts of most Christians and is based on 'the memory of the crime of their ancestors' (ibid. 117). In literature, the Jews were caricatured (see 3.1.3), although some enlightened Christians, such as Montesquieu and Lessing advocated tolerance and Disraeli sought to change Christian attitudes to the Jews.

1.3.3 The Modern Period

By the end of the nineteenth century, anti-Judaism was a Europe-wide phenomenon. In France, Proudhon asked, in 1847, for the expulsion of Jews, saying 'it is not for nothing that Christians call them deicides... one must exterminate the race...', in Russia, there were riots and pogroms. Tsar Nicholas II sought to 'kill the Jews' because 'every year before the Passion they torture to death several dozens of children to get the blood to mix with their matzos in commemmoration of our Saviour whom they tortured to death on the cross' (Perry, 1994, 252). Anti-Jewish prejudice prevailed also in England. In the 1850s, an episcopal opposition disqualified the Jews from sitting in Parliament, as Jews were to swear on oath 'upon the true faith of a Christian', and only one Bishop hesitated to condemn the Jews for the death of Jesus (Knight, 1992, 388). In 1939, British surveys on anti-Semitism discovered the widespread belief that 'the Jews bring it all on themselves' or as a Christian said, 'the Jews crucified Christ. They are now suffering for their actions' (Parkes, 1969, 454).

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was still able to say in 1933, 'the Church of Christ has never lost sight of the thought that the chosen people nailed the Redeemer of the World to the Cross and must

bear the curse for its action through a long history of suffering', and Martin Niemoeller preached in 1937 that 'the Jews brought the Christian God to the Cross' (Saperstein, 1989, 4).

1.3.4 Conclusion

This brief survey of anti-Judaism made the point that the beliefs of the Church Fathers and their polemic against the Jews for crucifying Jesus, the Messiah, and for the crime of deicide, was decisive for church teaching and was to provide theological juistification for the persecution of the Jews throughout the centuries. In the Middle Ages, the teachings of the Church Fathers were extended and elaborated. Myths demonized the Jews, accusing them of causing the plague and of ritual murder of children. During the Reformation, anti-Jewish tirades were reminiscent of the vile language of the early Fathers. The Enlightenment with its liberal attitudes facilitated the rise of the Jews in society, but in its wake caused resentment because of their advancement in society and called for reversal of Jewish emancipation. In the twentieth century, racial ideas were raised, reminiscent of the 'purity of blood' notion in Spain during the Inquisition. It is a troubling fact that inspite of the Holocaust, Christian antisemitism has continued to the present. However, there are some hopeful signs that attitudes are changing. As theologians and church authorities have emphasized that a reinterpretation of our tradition is necessary, I am turning to the Gospels to ascertain how the trial narratives have been understood in the past and are being reinterpreted in this post-Holocaust era.

2.1 THE TRIAL NARRATIVES

In the following chapters, I shall examine the claim of commentators such as Parkes (Jones, 1997, 5) who argue that the roots of anti-Semitism lie in the gospels, Sandmel (Kysar, 1993, 113) that anti-Semitism is pervasive in the gospels, or Berkovitz (Jones, 1997, 4) that the New Testament is a most dangerous antisemitic tract, and I shall weigh these allegations against the views that the gospels do not contain anti-Judaism nor anti-Semitism, that they have been misinterpreted, and that anti-Judaism in the New Testament is anachronistic (Evans, 1993, 12f). With such controversial statements in mind, I approach the trial narratives asking my overarching question:

> Can the Trial narratives be read in a way that is not anti-Jewish ?

I shall explore whether the narratives are anti-Jewish, or not anti-Jewish, and I shall probe whether the text can be understood and read in a way that is not anti-Jewish. This approach will include questions such as these:

> How far does theology rather than history control the text ?
> How far is the text Christian apologia, presenting a distorted view of the Jews ?
> How far does prejudice govern our reading ?

In the following section, the focus of my investigation will be on the Markan and Johannine gospels, but reference will be made to Matthew and Luke where deviations seem most relevant After a brief exegesis of each section, I explore the views of modern scholars, and how they understand and interpret the real or supposed anti-Judaism of the narratives.

2.1.1 The Arrest

> Mark 14:43-52; Matthew 26:47-56; Luke 22:47-53; John 18:2-12;

The four gospels agree that hostile groups came at night seeking to arrest Jesus. In the Synoptics, (large) hostile crowds with swords and clubs, hostile Jewish authorities, i.e. the chief priests, elders (Mk/Matt, Lk), scribes (Mk), and officers of the temple police (Lk), came to arrest Jesus. In John, the police from the chief priests, the Pharisees, and a detachment of Roman soldiers with an officer came with lanterns, torches and weapons. All gospels report that Judas, the betrayer, came with the party. The disciples flee.

2.1.2 The Jewish Crowds

In the Synoptic Gospels, hostile crowds co-operate with the Jewish authorities in the arrest of Jesus and, from that day on, the crowd became increasingly antagonistic, except in Luke (23:27,35,48). Before the arrest the crowd was not hostile, but friendly and enthusiastic, and regarded Jesus as a prophet, and listened to him with delight (Mk. 3:7-10; 11:18; 12:37).

within the same gospel or in another it is hostile. In Mark, the crowd does not necessarily imply the same group throughout the gospel. Brown finds the mixed picture plausible, some were for and some against Jesus, whereas Maccoby refutes the idea of the crowd's hostility. Since historically the crowd was for Jesus, he blames Christian writers for distorting the fact (Brown 1994, 1421), (see the crowd's behaviour in 2.3.6).

Cohn (1972, 76) dos not find the text hostile to the crowd. He doubts the historicity of this scene. Since many people were sympathizers of Jesus, he finds it incredible that the police should have mobilized a large crowd, particularly that very night, unless they enlisted people from the lower strata, and they scarcely wanted the presence of a multitude (Mark 12:12). Cohn 's understanding is positive. He suggests that the gospels used the word in a subjective sense, and that it merely seemed to the disciples as if a multitude had descended on them.

2.1.3 "The Jews"

In Mark, the term "the Jews" occurs six times, five times in the designation "King of the Jews" (Mk.15:2,9,12,18,26), and in 7:3, where the use of "all the Jews" is a neutral designation. In Matthew, the term is used but once for those who reject Jesus (28:15). In the Fourth Gospel, the term"'the Jews" occurs seventy times, has various shades of meaning, referring both to those who believe in Jesus (8:31;11:45; 12:11) and to Jesus' enemies (2:18,20; 6:41; 8:48), the Jews do not understand him (6:52;7:35,8:57), they seek to kill him (5:16;7:1; 10:31), they are of the devil (8:39, 44). In the Passion narrative, the term is used nine times, and always pejoratively by those hostile to Jesus (18:12,31,38,40; 19:7,12, 15) (Brown, 1966, lxxii).

As "the Jews" in the Fourth Gospel are most often cast in the role of Jesus' opponents, the term has become in the reader's mind representative of opposition to Jesus, and nurtures anti-Judaism (Kysar, 1993, 114). Brown (1966., lxxii) does not think that the evangelist is antisemitic, but that he uses the term in an anachronistic way, and that the passage is indicative of the conflict between the Johannine community and the Jews.

As I am concerned with the use of the term that is not hostile, I refer to positive instances, Jews who admire Jesus (7:15; 12:9), Nicodemus seeks Jesus (3:1-15), defends him (7:50-57) and assists in Jesus' burial (18:38-39), and Jesus himself is identified as a Jew (4:9,22). This shows that the term, though used ambiguously, should be seen in its historical perspective, then the text could be read in way that is not anti-Jewish.

2.1.4 The Jewish Authorities

In the Synoptics, the chief priests figure in the passion prediction (Mk.8:31;10:33). They show their hatred for Jesus and seek to destroy him, but are afraid of the crowds (Mk. 3:6;

11:18;12:12). In John, they plot against Jesus (Jn. 5:18;7:45; 11:49-50). In the Passion narrative, the chief priests work through the Sanhedrin with scribes and elders. In the pre-Jerusalem ministry, the scribes are joined with the Pharisees (Mk.2:16; Lk.5:30), they take issue with Jesus' teaching (Mk. 2:6-7,16; 7:1,5; 9:14), and from Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem, they are with the priests the opponents of Jesus (Mk 11:18,27; Jn 18:3). In Matthew, the Jewish authorities are quick to condem an innocent man (26:65), and are prepared to cover up their malevolence with money (26:15; 28:11-12).

Since the Jewish groups in all the gospels play an adversarial role against Jesus, some commentators consider the text anti-Jewish. Sandmel (Evans, 1993, 3) finds the bitter criticisms of the Jews, and the sharp polemic language so antisemitic that he holds the gospels a repository for hostility to Jews and Judaism. Others disagree. Guelich (1993, 80f), for example, recognizes that in Mark, the Jewish groups are deliberately vilified, which would invoke anti-Judaism. He contends, however, that individual Jews and the Jewish people on the whole exhibit no anti-Judaism, that only certain Jewish authorities are against Jesus, and thus some form of anti-Judaism is implied.

Regarding the polemic language used, Evans (ibid) finds much harsher criticism in the Old Testament, for example in Isaiah (30:9-11; 57:3-5), and in Qumran polemics, which he alleges surpass in intensity that of the New Testament. The Qumran text was never thought of as anti-Jewish, because Qumran was interpreted, as it should be, in its Jewish context. In Evans' judgment, the New Testament polemic is basically Gentile, though dressed in Jewish garb, that disagreements and criticism of particulars Jews only appear anti-Judaic, and that the writings are true expressions of Judaism, but that later generations of Christians misunderstood the hermeneutic of criticism, seeing it no longer as a challenge from within. This raises the question of the interpretation of biblical texts in their historical and sociopolitical setting, offering a positive way of understanding Judaism, see below (2.3.8).

2.1.5 The Pharisees

The Pharisees are seen in opposition to Jesus, they argue with him (Mk.8:11,15), they are Jesus' opponents (Jn.8:13;12:42) and plot against him (Jn.7:32;11:46,47,57). Some Pharisees, however, warn Jesus of dangers (Lk.13:31). Jesus eats with them (Lk.7:36; 14:1), praises some of them (Mk.12:34), sees them as authoritative teachers (23.2), and shares pharisaic doctrines (Mk.12:28-34; Matt.6:1-18). Despite Jesus' harsh criticism of them (Matt 23), the Pharisees are absent in the passion narratives, except in Matthew 27:62; and in John.18:3.

I have to mention the Pharisees in this paper, since some of the gospels speak interchangeably of the Jews, the leaders of Judaism, the Pharisees and the chief priests, and a distinction may not be pertinent. The absence of the Pharisees need not mean that readers

would have thought that the Pharisees had no responsibility for Jesus' death (Brown, 1994, 1424).

Although the gospels present an inconsistent picture of the Pharisees, Christian commentators throughout the centuries have traditionally presented the Pharisees in a negative light, and many scholars see the Pharisees as the prime enemies of Jesus. Wette claims that 'Jesus stood in total opposition to Pharisaism', Wellhausen that 'Jesus was no Pharisee' and Harnack that 'Jesus broke through the rubbish of Pharisaism' (Heschel, 1994, 231). What Heschel finds disturbing in the writings of these supposedly objective historians, including Bultmann, is not so much what they say, since their anti-Judaism is not new, instead it is the credence they have lent to Christian theological prejudice, and that their arguments were carried to an extreme conclusion by pro-Nazi German Christian theologians.

A different, and not hostile view of Pharisees is held by those scholars, who see Jesus within the framework of Judaism. Since Geiger identified Jesus as a Pharisee, who taught in the tradition of the Pharisees, such as Hillel, it has been argued that if Jesus lived in harmony with his contemporaries, his death must have had a political motive. Thus, from Reimarus to Brandon, Jesus has repeatedly been placed in company of the Zealots (Merkel 1984, 129; Brandon 1968, 30), (see Barabbas, 2.3.7).

In some recent works, scholars saw fit to minimize the apparent hostilities between Jesus and the Pharisees. Jack Sanders (1993,18) claims that the Pharisees were in dispute with Jesus about practice, *halakah,* which was normal at that time and that these debates make sense only on Jewish soil. Others argue that the opposition to Jesus reflects the 80s and 90s, when the Pharisees emerged as main opponents of the Johannine community (Brown, 1994, 1431), or that the controversies with the Pharisees were magnified by the early church. Sanders is thus able to say that from such evidence 'we know of no substantial conflict of Jesus with the Pharisees' (1985, 290). This statement seems to be supported by the representation of Jesus as a Pharisee which, Heschel (1994, 234) asserts, has recently become quite common among both Jewish and Christian commentators. This supports my thesis that the gospels can be read in a way that is not anti-Jewish.

2.1.6 The Romans

The arrest of Jesus is foreshadowed throughout the Gospels and reveals that the Jewish authorities conspire to arrest Jesus, but are afraid of the crowds (Mk.3:6; 11:18; 12:12-13; Jn.5:16, 10:39; 11:53,57). In the Synoptics, the Jewish authorities alone arrest Jesus. In John, there is a combined Jewish-Roman action

Since John includes Roman troops in the arrest, I wish to question why Mark omitted any mention of the Romans, and whether such omission reinforces the perception of anti-

Judaism. According to Goguel (Winter, 1961,46), two traditions existed originally, the earlier attributed the arrest solely to the Romans, the latter to the Jewish police force. The Fourth Gospel combines both traditions, whereas Mark, for political reasons, reproduced only the later one, since writing about 70 CE, it would have been dangerous to incriminate the Romans, and so he attributed the arrest to the Jewish people.

The question arises whether theology has influenced the text. Since the arresting party came with lanterns and torches (John18:3), Brown (1994, 250) asks whether the troops needed light, or whether this incident is theologically symbolic, as both the Roman and the Jewish groups despite their apparent power are forced to the ground before Jesus (18:6), and Jesus' power will frighten Pilate as well (19:8).

The historicity of Roman involvement in John's arrest scene is disputed by scholars such as Blinzler, Lohse, Barrett, and also Besnier (Brown, ibid) who holds that there were too few Roman troops in Jerusalem. Others contend that Roman soldiers would never have delivered a prisoner to a Jewish high priest.

Other commentators, however, accept that historicity governs the text. Winter (1961, 46), argues that as John was antagonistic to the Jews but sympathetic to the Romans, he would have suppressed Roman participation unless it was a well established tradition. Most contemporary scholars now seem to accept John's version as historical despite their differing theories regarding the authority on which Jesus was arrested. Cohn (1972, 84) convincingly argues that the presence both of a Roman cohort and of Jewish police proves that the Roman and Jewish commanders acted by pre-arrangement, and that the arrest was in Roman interests. The high rank of a tribune indicates, that Pilate was consulted, as seen from his readiness to hold proceedings early the next morning. The high priest too was aware of the forthcoming trial, since he asked the Romans for Jesus' custody on the very night when the city overflowed with visitors, and his complicity with the traitor Judas affirms his involvement in the affair.

2.1.7 Judas Iscarioth

All four gospels report that Judas goes before (or with) the arresting party to identify Jesus. Judas was an instrument of Satan (Luke 22:3), he was of the devil (John 6:70-71;13:2), and he betrayed his friend and master with a kiss (Mark 14:45). His motive was greed (Matt 26:14), he was a thief (John 12:6) and Jesus knew who would betray him (Matt.26:23).

The gospels thus depict Judas as a diabolic character. The name Judas *Ioudas,* is etymologically related to Jew, and the one who gave Jesus over could, therefore, be regarded as the quintessential Jew, says Brown (1994, 1395). This notion was taken up by Augustine who declared that Judas represents the Jews, an aspect exploited in Christian art and in

literature.

The historicity of this story is questioned. Some scholars maintain that Judas never existed, that he originally was a symbolic figure, or that large parts of the story are ficticional (Brown, 1994, 1395). Spong (1997, 270) also insists that this story lacks historic credibility. As almost all incidents in the Judas story can be traced back to the Old Testament, Spong holds it for a midrashic creation in order to serve the apologetic needs of the Christians toward the end of the first century, and to transfer the guilt for Jesus' death from the Romans to the Jews.

Cohn (1972, 79) proposes theological reasons for this story, saying that there was no need for the betrayal as Jesus often went to the Mount of Olives and could easily have been followed, and the indigenous temple police would have regarded an offer of guidance an insult. Jesus was a public figure. There was no need for identification. Jesus identified himself (John 18:4-5). Various motives for Judas' behaviour have been advanced, for example, that he rejected Jesus' claim to be the Messiah, the Son of God, or that he was impatient with Jesus' failure to inaugurate the Kingdom of God. Brown (1994, 641) compares the betrayal of Judas and Peter. Whereas Judas is unforgiven in the Christian tradition, Peter is venerated because he was not responsible for Jesus' death, but Judas was. The reason for the Judas story is advanced by Sanders (1985, 309) explaining that Judas did not simply show the place where Jesus was, but disclosed that Jesus' disciples thought of him privately as king, and thus Judas provided the chief priests with the final weapon they needed, a specific charge to present to Pilate.

2.1.8 Interim Conclusion

The arrest scene treats some of the concerns of this paper. It questions the involvement of the Jews and the Romans in Jesus' arrest and introduces the various groups that play an adversarial role against Jesus in the forthcoming trial. The chief priests seek to destroy Jesus, the Jewish authorities are antagonistic, the crowds hostile and 'the Jews' seem to heighten the animosity toward the Jesus, whereas the Roman participation is omitted in the Synoptics. This gives the impression of considerable Jewish hostility. However, the historicity of the scene is questioned, theology seems to govern the text, and apologia presents a distorted view of the Jews. The polemic language only appears hostile but is not real. This makes the reader aware that a critical approach to the trial narratives is necessary to afford a positive understanding of Judaism and, as we shall see below, the text can then be read in a way that is not anti-Jewish.

2.2 THE JEWISH TRIAL

Mark 14:53-64, Matthew 26:57--66, Luke 22:54-55, 66-71, John 18:12-13, 19-24,

The Gospels agree that Jesus was taken from the place of arrest to the high priest. In Mk/Matt, Jesus is taken to the high priest's palace. A night interrogation takes place on the eve of the Sabbath and reaches a verdict at night, followed by a day trial. In Luke, there is only a daytrial. In John, a night interrogation is by Annas alone, then by Caiaphas. According to Mark (15:1) the Sanhedrin held a consultation, *sumboulion,* a council session.

Cohn (1972,106) Brown, and others claim that there was no trial, but merely a preliminary enquiry. Some scholars contend that there were two trials, first a religious, then a political one, whereas Blinzler (Brown, 1994, 361) and others claim that the trial before the Sanhedrin was the real one. According to John, the Sanhedrin had met earlier (11:47) to formulate a case acceptable to the Romans, since the Jews were not allowed to try a capital case (John 18:31).

2.2.1 The Temple Incident

Priestly hostility toward Jesus was kindled by the temple incident (Mark 11:15:18). The Sanhedrin sought testimony (Matt. false testimony) against Jesus and many bore false witness. Some were accusing Jesus of threatening to destroy the sanctuary and build another, but their testimony did not agree, it was dismissed. In John, fear is voiced that the Romans might destroy the temple(11:48),

Theissen (Brown, 1994, 540) explains why Jesus' threat against the Temple would have aroused the hostility of priests and of the people because, he says, the temple was a key institution of civic and religious life in Judea, and any menace to it was of theological, socio-economic and political concern. According to Perkins (2000, 202), before 70 CE , Christians would have wrestled with Jesus' prophecy, because his death and resurrection had not destroyed the Temple. After 70 CE, Christians believed that the destruction of Jerusalem was the long-delayed judgment of God for the failure of the Jews to receive Jesus, the Messiah (Luke 19:42-44). The Jews, on the contrary, held that the destruction of Jerusalem was the result of Roman brutality and Jewish fanaticism. The Jews would have mocked Jesus' prophecy and, to discredit Christianity, looked forward to rebuilding the Temple (cf.Emperor Julian). Perkins' theory is that the evangelists went far beyond Jesus' prophetic words (Mk 13:2), investing the fall of Jerusalem with such an importance (Lk 21:24) , that their claims about Jesus as Israel's messiah would not be credible if the Temple still stood, and an anti-Judaism supported by a Jerusalem in ruins, would not be imprinted on the Christian imagination, and Christians would still be part of Judaism.

2.2.2 The Christological Titles

The high priest asked Jesus:"Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed /of God ?" And Jesus said, "I am; and you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14::61).

Since the meaning of the christological titles differs in Judaism and Christianity, I shall first survey briefly the Jewish meaning of the titles, next their development in the gospels, and then consider recent understanding of the titles.

In Judaism, the *meshia,* was the '"Anointed" a king, a warrior, a human figure expected to fulfil the promises of the prophets and liberate the Jews from foreign rule. In the post-exilic period, there was the hope that a messianic king would restore the Davidic throne, a human figure, a prophet like Moses (Brown 1994, 473).

God could speak of Israel as 'my son' (Exod. 422; Hosea 11:1), a Davidic king is treated by God as a son (II Sam.7), and a king could be adopted as God's son (Wisdom), (Brown). Jews believe that all human beings are children of the one God, being a son, not the Son of God (Falk, 1990,105).

The popular understanding of the Messiah was a king like David, a political liberator. Against this background, Jesus refused to be made king (John 6:15;12:13-15), yet the kingly aspect was decisive in the Roman execution. Jesus was seldom addressed as Christ (Mark 8:29; John 4:25). The question posed by the chief priest (Mark 14:61) can best be understood if seen in the light of what precedes. Mark presents the gospel of 'Jesus Christ, the Son of God'(1.1), which suggests divinity and would redefine messiahship. When Jesus questions his own identity, Peter acclaims him 'the Christ' (Mark 8:29). Jesus' charge not to divulge anything, the 'messianic secret' (v.30), might indicate Jesus' reserve about using the term. Jesus' question to the disciples anticipates that of the high priest.

The high priest's question whether Jesus was 'the Christ' did not for Jews connote divine nature, and the 'Son of God' connotes divine appointment rather than divine nature (Gundry, 1992, 909). Jesus' affirmative answer *ego eimi* (Mark 14:61) would have been understood by Christians, as *su ei ho Christos* was the formula of early confession. In the Fourth Gospel, the absolute use of *ego eimi* gives voice to Jesus' divine claim (8:24,28,58, 18:6) and to the reaction of the arresting party (17:11-12) and to that of Pilate (19:11) (Brown, 1994, 468). Cohn (1972, 130) does not consider 'I am' a divine name, it is not sacrosanct, it is used in everyday speech.

Scholars largely agree that the messianic titles were applied to Jesus after his death and resurrection by Gentile Christians. The evangelists communicated Christian credal

expressions, the meaning of these titles differed from usage in Jesus' lifetime (Brown, ibid). In the Fourth Gospel, Jesus' Messiahship became for the Johannine Christians a very high concept, which Jews would have called heretical. Jesus declares his superiority, he has God's power on earth (5:21; 6:38; 10:30). This understanding of the Messiah belongs to the emerging church and suggests the development of anti-Jewish sentiments (Sanders, 1993, 44). Van Buren (1987, 331) also blames the church for anti-Judaism, saying the church presumed to tell the Jews that the Messiah had already come and, adding insult to injury, made an anti-Jewish symbol out of the sign of Jewish hope, the Messiah.

Ruether (1993, 52) claims that theologically anti-Judaism developed as the left hand of Christology, and that its roots are found in the conflict of Judaism and Chritianity over the messianic idea. Since the Christ of the Christian faith has become the basis of an anti-Judaic gospel, Ruether argues that we need to examine how Christology can be reconstructed. This seems to suggest that in future our reading could be without anti-Jewish bias. Metz and others also hold a revision of Christian theology necessary, Metz challenges the Christian churches to spell out the meaning of the *memoria passionis Jesu Christi* in the midst of our modern society (1995, 45).

2.2.3 The Son of Man

The term 'son of man' is used over ninety times in the Hebrew scriptures. A divine voice addresses Ezekiel as 'son of man', a human being. In Daniel (7:13) 'one like a son of man' means like a human being. An image of a heavenly 'son of man' might have developed in first century BCE, and in apocalyptic circles of first century CE, the picture arose of a messianic human figure glorified by God and made a judge (Brown, 1994, 511).

In the gospels, this term appears eighty times. At the trial, in response to the priest's question, Jesus referred to the Son of Man (Mark 14:62; cf. John 1:51). However, Jesus never explains the meaning and nobody addresses him by this title (Brown, 1994, 512). The phrase refers most often to the Son of Man's sufferings and to his future vindication. John talks about exaltation and glorification (Hooker, 1995, 89).

Brown (ibid) outlines different theories of this concept. Lindars says that this expression is used as a 'man of my position', some suggest it means 'I'. Perrin argues that this term derived from christian reflection on Daniel 7 and Psalm 110:1 to herald Jesus as the exalted Lord. Since Jesus sometimes appears to make a distinction between himself and the Son of man (Mark 8:38) or seems to speak of someone else, many scholars hold that Jesus referred to the coming, eschatological Son of man, and that the early Church identified him with this figure after the resurrection. Although Jesus apparently used the title of himself, he does not treat it as a christological title since it is not included in the messianic secret (Hooker, ibid). In

Conzelmann's view, Jesus never used the phrase and the sayings are creations of the early community. Wright (1992, 153) sees the expression used as a menace. Jesus claims to be the Son of man in Danielic symbolism, but as in Daniel 7 the enemies of the son of man were the beasts, the meaning and its implied threat were clear, so Caiaphas tore his robes and cried 'blasphemy'. Cohn (1972, 127) denies that the use of this expression in association of the Messiah with 'clouds of heaven' or a seat at the right hand of God would constitute an offence under Jewish law.

2.2.4 Blasphemy

'*blasphem-*' in Greek means abuse, insult. At times it refers to cursing or belittling God (Brown,1994,531) and another definition is that of 'speaking disrespectfully of the Law'.

Mark's narrative could be read as anti-Jewish, as almost from the outset, Jesus is accused of blasphemy. In Mark (2:7) Jesus' reference to the Son of Man was in response to the charge of blasphemy for forgiving sins and, therefore, many scholars suggest that the use of this title produced the chief priests' indictment of Jesus (14:64). Others have doubts about any justification of a blasphemy charge and question whether Jesus' statement (14:62) was meant metaphorically, literally, was a self-application of Jesus, or for a future figure.Thus it seems difficult to base the charge of blasphemy alone on the Son of Man statement. (Brown, ibid). Légasse (1994, 41) argues that the scene derives from a Christian hand and is for the believing reader to reflect on the divine glory of Jesus.

In John, Jesus defends his claim to be the Son of God (10:36), but the Sanhedrin charge him for blasphemy in making himself God (19:7). Brown (1970, 408) argues that Jesus never made himself anything and that this is a post-resurrectional insight.

2.2.5 Interim Conclusion

The Sanhedrin investigation shows tension. The priests at first accuse Jesus of threatening the temple, then dismiss the charge, then question Jesus about messianic aspirations and finally charge him of blasphemy. At the Roman court, they do not indict Jesus on a religious offence, but on a political charge. The reason for such a desperate measure is provided by John (11.48), the chief priests demanding the death of one man for the benefit of the country. Implicit in this claim is the maintenance of the religious leaders' own position. However, since the belief that Jesus was put to death as a messianic claimant is firmly established in the Christian tradition (Hooker, 1995,360), a detailed examination of christological titles was necessary to outline similarities and differences in Christian and Jewish understanding. Such knowledge, as we shall see (3.1.4), is relevant in seeking to overcome anti-Judaism.

2.3.0 The Roman Trial

Mark 15:2-15 Matthew 27:11-26 Luke 23:2-25 John 18:28-19:16

In this section, I shall refer to all four gospel, and examine the representation of Pontius Pilate, the dream of Pilate's wife, the part played by the Jews, append an excursus on Barrabas and then explore whether the responsibility for the death of Jesus can be interpreted in a way that is not anti-Jewish.

2.3.1 Jesws before Pontius Pilate

The gospels agree that the Jewish authorities handed Jesus over to Pilate. Without official charges being made (except in Luke 23:2), Pilate asks Jesus whether he is the King of the Jews (Mark 15:2), thus using a title that has not been applied before. This indicates a shift from the previous religious charge to a political one. Jesus' answer 'You say so' is ambiguous. Mark's Pilate is amazed at Jesus' silence (v.5) and offers to release him (v.6), but to satisfy the crowd, he delivers Jesus to be crucified (v.15).

In Matthew's expansion, Pilate, though warned by his wife's dream (27:19), yields to the crowd's demand for Jesus' crucifixion (w.22-24), but washes his hands before the crowd to demonstrate his innocence in the shedding of Jesus' blood.(v.24).

Luke interpolates the episode with Herod (23:6-12). On Jesus' return from Herod, Pilate is able to decla'e that both of them do not find Jesus guilty (vv.14,15).

The Johannine Pilate reluctantly deals with the prisoner. Since Jesus claims that his kingship is not of this world (18:36-37), Pilate attempts to release him (v.39).On Jesus' silence regarding charge of making himself the Son of God (v.7-9), Pilate stresses the power the power he has over Jesus, an idea which Jesus rejects, 'unless it had been given to him from above' (19:9-12). A frightened Pilate seeks to release Jesus, but threatened with disloyalty to Caesar (v. 12), he accedes to the will of the Jews, and hands Jesus over to them (v. 16).

These passages give the impression that Pilate is a well-intentioned governor, quite unlike the protesting chief priests. Pilate seems considerate, he addresses Jesus directly, warns him about the dangers of being silent (Mark 15:4-5), makes sure Jesus understands the accusations against him (Matthew 27:13-14), pronounces Jesus' innocence three times (Luke 23:4,15,22) and presents Jesus twice to the crowd to gain sympathy for him (John 19:5,14). Pilate challenges the Jews to judge Jesus themselves (John 18:31) and acknowledges that this trial is not a Roman idea (v.35). It seems that Pilate does not take all the charges seriously (Brown, 1994, 749). However, Pilate is not always so positively portrayed. Winter considers him 'a dim- witted, weak-minded prefect, easily manipulated by the subordinate Jewish people' (1961, 55). Brown (1994, 69 5) holds Pilate vulnerable apart from the patronage of the

anti-Jewish Sejanus and in fear of exposure to those in authority over him, and he had faults. He provoked the Jews as seen in incidents such as the Ionic Standards, or the aqueduct riot. Nevertheless, he seemed quite an efficient governor with a long tenure. These descriptions conflict with hostile portrayals by secular writers. Philo describes Pilate as ruthless, guilty of corruption, of unbridled cruelty (cf. Luke 13:1), merciless and obstinate (Hooker, 1995, 66). Brandon similarly considers Pilate a tough-minded governor, supported by a strong military force, who did not need to give in to the crowds, particularly as he was the paramount judicial authority with lawyers at his command. Yet, the evangelists depict him as a messenger moving in and out of the pretorium to bargain with the Jews for the release of a prisoner whom he knows to be innocent (John 18:38; 19:4). Brandon (1968, 134) and others do not consider this a historical presentation. Btandon argues that the evangelists are influenced by theological and political expedients as they seek to explain away the scandal of the Roman cross and endeavour to make Pilate witness to the innocence of Jesus.

2.3.2 The Washing of Hands

The presentation of Pilate wahing his hands (Matt.27:24) seeks to demonstrate his innocence and the repudiation of responsibility for the death of Jesus. Since the washing of hnads was a Jewish custom, unknown to Romans, Cohn (1979 267) holds that Pilate would never have washed his hands in public, demeaning himself before multitudes of natives. Nor does Ben-Chorin (1992, 165) consider this a credible account, since Pilate, who says 'Am I a Jew' (John 18:35), would scarcely have alluded to Bible quotations (Ps.26:6; 73:13). In Dodd's view, this is an anti-Jewish scene, since Pilate's action 'leaves the Jews fully and solely responsible for the outcome' (1976, 116). Many scholars, however, agree that Pilate cannot excape guilt, for it was his decision to hand Jesus over to be crucified (Mark 15:19), but he does share some responsibility with others. Jesus said, the one who handed him over bears the greater sin (John 19:11). Judas handed Jesus over (Mark 14:45), so did the chief priests and the people (15:11). Pilate is the last in the chain. Since Pilate is the supreme judicial authority, he did not have to pass the death sentence, he could have released Jesus. He is responsible for his actions, he cannot wash off the blood of his hands, however much he tried. Yet, in Christian thought, the handwashing scene is remembered as exculpating Pilate and inculpating the Jews. It is widely depicted in Christian art (see illustration on the previous page, and see 3.1.3).

2.3.3 The Dream of Pilate's wife

The Romans attached great importance to dream augury. The suffering of Pilate's wife in a dream was, at that time, considered indicative of some disaster that was to befall her husband (cf. Julius Caesar's wife, alluded to by Montefiore, in Winter 1961, 56). It was thought (Trilling , in Winter, ibid) that Pilate's guilt would increase if, not heeding the heavenly

warning, Pilate expressed an unjust verdict. This creates the impression that her testimony of Jesus' righteousness (Matthew 27:19) led Pilate to make the effort not to become tainted with blood (vv.24-25), says Brown (1994, 805), and that this dream (v.19) was primarily a sign that Gentiles could recognize the truth about Jesus in contrast to the Jews. Green's (19 92, 199) comment is relevant, saying that this dream reinforces Matthew's theme of Jesus being God's chosen one. Although her dream did not affect the outcome of the trial, the Christian tradition transformed this, exonerated Pilate and even canonised him. His wife became a saint in the Eastern church and the divine origin of her dream was recognised by church writers, such as Origen, Jerome, Augustine.

2.3.4 The Jews

In Mark (15:1) the chief priests, elders and the whole council delivered Jesus to Pilate.They accused Jesus of many things. The chief priests were jealous (v.10). They stirred up the crowd to get Barrabbas released (v.11) and they cried out to have Jesus crucified (vv.13-14). The chief priests and people shout together (Luke 23:18). In Matthew, the people as a whole accepted responsibility (27:25). In John, the Jews allege that Jesus made himself the Son of God (19:7), they are malevolent (19:6,15), they deny their own faith (v.15) and threaten Pilate (19:12) until he 'handed him over to them to be crucified' (19:16).

The representation of the Jews seems to depict an anti-Judaism. The chief priests, previously afraid of the people(see 2.1.3), now influence them to demand Jesus' crucifixion and the release of a robber (Mk.15:11). The crowd, apparently powerful, threatens the governor (Jn.19:12), the people all shout together, they are part of 'the Jews' (Luke 23.18; John 19:12). The gospels are not of equal clarity to whom Jesus is given over but seem to imply that the Jews proceeded to crucify Jesus (Mark 15:15, Matthew 27:26). Mark, however, makes it clear that 'the soldiers led him away' (15:16,20), and John saying in 19:16 'he handed him over to them' (the Jews), states in v.23 that 'the soldiers had crucified Jesus', and in v.38 that Pilate gave permission to Joseph of Arimathea to take away the body of Jesus. This attests that Pilate was responsible for Jesus' crucifixion, not the Jews. In Luke, Pilate delivered Jesus 'up to their will' (23:25), and they 'crucified him' (24:20). Sanders, contending that Luke's meaning is that Jewish executioneers put Jesus to death, not the Romans (23:25-26), declares 'were it not for the adamant, stiff-necked, irrational and perverse insistence of the chief priests... Jesus would have been released' (1987, 9). Many scholars disagree. Wellhausen, and Conzelmann doubt that Luke intended to give that impression They insist that Pilate is involved in Jesus' death. Sanders concedes, 'involvement may be, guilt no' (1987 13) (see guilt below). Lagrange asserts that it only appears as if Jews and not Romans conducted Jesus. Evans (1993, 16), as we shall see below, criticises Sanders' faulty exegesis. Caird, Rengstorf and other maintain that the Romans crucified Jesus Since crucifixion was a Roman penalty and not a Jewish punishment which would have been by stoning, this

corroborates the fact of the Roman crucifixion, as does the *titulus* on the cross (John 19:19) (cf. the Nicene Creed 'he was crucified under Pontius Pilate').

2.3.5 'All the people'

In all the gospels, 'all the people' shout to have Jesus crucified (Mk. 15:14). It is a collective term with several implications. According to Brown (1994, 837), the most important reason for Matthew's use of it lies in the OT usage of 'the people' for Israel. From the post-70 period, Matthew sees those in Jerusalem who cry for Jesus' death as representative of the whole Jewish people who suffered God's punishment in the Roman suppression of the Jewish Revolt. Seen from a historical point of view, Brown argues that 'all the people' could not have been there, and so any responsibility can apply only to the handful who were present. Green (1992, 16) claims that v. 25 has been misunderstood and that Matthew's generalization of a group of people of great variety was for rhetorical and dramatic effect.

2.3.6 'His Blood on us and on our Children'

Matthew alone adds the seemingly factual account to the trial, a saying that is thought to be primarily a formula of Israelite holy law dealing with responsibility for death and the ensuing punishment is sometimes specified, sometimes left in God's hand (cf.Lev.20:9,11; Jer.26:15). The people's cry is claimed to be an affirmation that they consider Jesus guilty and take upon themselves the responsibility for Jesus' blood, but it is not a self-curse, asserts Brown (1994, 838).

Some scholars hold that the exclamation 'his blood on us' was nothing more than was always said of witnesses testifying in criminal trials, or that it was meant as a warning to Pilate not to proceed (Cohn, 1972,263). Others claim that the Matthean words for various reasons strain historical probability, for example that the addition in the passion narrative stresses Jewish responsibility so that anti-Judaism is intensified and that it seems unlikely that the people by pronouncing the ancient curse would have implicated all future generations of Jews. Jones, therefore, claims that Matthew's saying (27:25) is not a record of events, but a literary composition and that Winter, quoting Bultmann, even describes these words as 'legendary accretion', a point of view espoused by many commentators (Jones, 1997, 16).

Of concern to this inquiry are the tragic consequences of verse 25, to which Cohn refers when he says that the Matthean tradition of guilt and the eternal curse laid on the Jewish people became the theological basis of never-ending persecution, replacing the Lukan and Pauline tradition of divine pardon. Ben-Chorin (1977, 170) takes up the issue of forgiveness, arguing that the self-curse, if ever uttered, would be annulled through Jesus' prayer at the cross (Lk.23:34) and should be combined with a healing factor, since the blood of Jesus, according to Christian faith, cleanses from all sins. Brown concurs, 'where punishment is attributed to

God, there is also God's sovereignty to forgive and break the chain of responsibility' (1994, 838). These comments should facilitate our reading the text in a way that is not anti-Jewish.

The Vatican recently dealt with this difficult verse by omitting Matthew 27:25 from lectionary reading as 'Christians have used this verse to accuse the Jewish people of Christ's death' (Pawlikowski, 1997, 18) This verse was also omitted from the Oberammergau Passion play. (Omitting texts from the gospels see 3.1.2-3).

2.3.7 Excursus: The Barabbas Episode

In Mark, Barabbas was in prison with rebels (15:7). He was a notorious prisoner (Matt.27:16), a murderer (Lk.23:19,25), a *lestes,* a violent lawless bandit (Jn.18:40). The name Barabbas is variously interpreted. It is thought to be a patronymic, i.e. a father's name. Some hold it related to the aramaic *Bar-Abba,* 'son of the father', or that Bar-Rabban means 'son of a teacher'(Brown, 1994, 799), or that it was a common name (Baeck, 1958, 119).

The gospels agree on the custom of the paschale release of a prisoner, but Brown (1994, 817) Hooker and others doubt that such a custom existed. Winter 1961, 93) holds it a figment of imagination. Cohn (1972, 165) argues that if Barabbas was released by Pilate, then the people had no hand in it and he questions how Pilate, releasing a resistance fighter, could have justified his conduct to the Emperor, who was well-known for severe punishment for *crimen laesae maiestatis.*

Brandon's (1968, 103, 147) hypothesis is that the fate of Jesus became linked to that of Barabbas and that Jesus' political action in the Temple (11:15-17) coincided with the insurrection led by Ba0rabbas (Lk.23:19). Since two *lestai* (Zealots) were crucified with Jesus, this suggests that in the minds of the authorities the two operations were regarded as connected and so the 'King of the Jews' (Mk. 15:9,12) was seen as the real and more dangerous leader. Brandon acknowledges that this pericope magnifies the culpabilities of the Jews. Légasse (1994, 69) similarly claims that the Barabbas episode stigmatizes the Jews for their iniquitous choice whilst emphasizing the humanity of Pilate as seen in his reluctance to condemn Jesus. For Boff (1993, 40), the Barabbas episode seems to be legendary and an apologetic motif of the primitive church to facilitate the preaching of the gospel under Roman control, thus exculpating Pilate by blaming the Jews.

2.3.8 Conclusion

This paper set out to explore whether the trial narratives were anti-Jewish, and if so, whether they could be read in a way that is not anti-Jewish. On conclusion of my examination, I contend that the narratives should, indeed, be read in that positive way. Based on the evidence of the gospels and on my reflection of modern reinterpretations by Christian and by

Jewish scholars, as also on my as yet slight experience of Christian-Jewish dialogue, I acknowledge that my understanding has been transformed, and I have come to the conclusion that the gospels are not anti-Jewish, they only appear so at times. In order to read the text from this new perspective, many factors have to be taken into account which influence the interpretation of the gospels, such as history, theology or apologia as well as a sociohistorical and political context, in which the meaning becomes visible.

We have seen that a surface reading of the passion narratives gave the impression as if an anti-Jewish bias were governing the text. The Jewish authorities, the Pharisees, the Jews, and the crowds are all ranged against Jesus far more than the Romans. However, a closer study reveals that the gospel accounts are far more varied. The opposition of the Jewish authorities is not unanimous, only some of those in authority are hostile, others are not hostile, some are for Jesus (Nicodemus). The crowd's antagonism toward Jesus after his arrest, contrasts with the crowd's admiration for Jesus before his arrest. The anachronistic use of the term 'the Jews' in John refers to those who are for Jesus and those who are against him. It was later that the term became understood as anti-Jewish, though it remains a difficult matter. Pontius Pilate, historically known for his cruelty, is shown in a favourable light, wanting to release Jesus, whereas the high priests conspire against Jesus. The evangelists seem reluctant to state clearly that Pilate condemned Jesus to be crucified, instead there is the weak statement that Pilate handed Jesus over. These examples indicate that the gospels are not historical records, although they are set in historical surroundings and deal with historical figures. They are messages of faith, and must be seen in the sociopolitical setting of the time of Jesus.

Theological and political factors have influenced the evangelists, as they sought to explain away the scandal of the Roman cross. The original Jewish-Christians presented Jesus as the Messiah, martyred for Israel (cf. Luke 24:26), but as a Messiah could not suffer such a shameful death, the evangelists had Pilate witness to the innocence of Jesus and made the Jews solely responsible for Jesus' death. Originally there was no anti-Judaism, that developed later and was read back into the first century (Brandon, 1968, 139).

Some apologetics deal with the fulfilment of prophetic material, the evangelists referring to Jesus' predictions that the scriptures 'be fulfilled' (Mark 14:49). In the passion predictions (8:31;9:31,10:34,45), the centrality of the cross in the divine plan is revealed. Thus, there are two motifs, the death of Jesus is the result of political intrigue, and the death of the Messiah is in God's redemptive plan. However, if Jesus' death is the fulfilment of scripture and the consummation of God's revealed will, the question must be raised, why the Jews are held responsible for Jesus' death, an issue, which Brown (1994, 839) acknowledges, has not yet been dealt with. This, surely needs to be addressed theologically.

Another fulfilment prognosis deals with the destruction of the Temple, which Christians took

as fulfilment of Jesus' prediction, in contrast to the Jews, who understand the destruction as penalty for disobeying God's commandments, but never as a reson for Jesus' execution. Thus, Christians and Jews read the scriptures indifferent ways (as also seen in 2.2.2).

There is the problem of language. We have seen that the polemic language, which is so harsh to modern ears (see 1.1.4) was in common use throughout the ancient world. The language used in the gospels does not even approximate that of the OT or of Qumran. It is a semitic characteristic to paint with bright colours. Moreover, the meaning of the polemics must be seen against social, historical, and religious factors, otherwise there could be serious misunderstanding. Sanders, as we have seen above, finds everywhere in Luke/Acts evidence of the evangelist's hatred of the Jewish people, insisting that it was the 'Jewish chief priests and rulers' who crucified Jesus (24:20), Evans (1993, 16), however disagrees. He criticises Sanders for not placing Luke's polemic in context and not comparing it with the polemic language of Israel's prophetic tradition, which shows that the narrative reflects in-house prophetic criticism and does not contain anti-Judaism.

Finally, I have to acknowledge the huge influence which tradition has on our attitude. Since the Church Fathers taught that the Jews crucified the Messiah, and even accused them of deicide, their teachings were elaborated and expanded by later generations, leading to persecutions, demonology, ghettoization and finally to the Holocaust. With such a hostile background, it is little wonder that prejudice and presuppositions govern our reading of the gospels. However, due to reinterpretations by modern scholars, we are now able to see the scriptures in a new light, and as seen above, we can now read the text in a way that is not anti-Jewish. That this is not always easy, that many difficulties have still to be overcome, is an issue which we shall discuss in the next chapter.

3.1.0 POST HOLOCAUST ANTI-JUDAISM and the PASSION NARRATIVES

In this section, I explore how far a post-Holocaust interpretation of the passion narratives by modern Christian and Jewish theologians and the revised teachings of the churches assist Christians in gaining a new understanding and insight into Judaism. First, I treat of a reader-centred interpretation, acknowledging the reader's position, his/her prejudices and presuppositions. Next, I explore anti-Judaism, first in church teachings, and then in western culture, observing how an anti-Jewish bias in art, in literature and Passion plays persists in influencing Christians in a negative way. I also review briefly the Passion story in modern children's books. Finally I explore how a post-Holocaust Christian-Jewish dialogue aims at overcoming anti-Jewish sentiments, how German Lutheran churches seek reconciliation with the Jews, and conclude that, when united, Christians and Jews can forestal anti-Judaism.

3.1.1 Reader-centred Interpretation

The focus of this section is on a reader-centred interpretation of the scriptures. Each reader approaches the scriptures with certain cultural and personal assumptions, and from different perspectives. What a reader understands is determined by his/her place in society, his/her position, interests, experience, prejudice and presuppositions. An unbiased, objective reading is, therefore, not possible. The problem is how a reader understands and interprets our Christian tradition today. According to Fiorenza, one's social location is decisive for how one sees the world or interprets the texts. 'What we see depends on where we stand' (1993, 3). Approaching the gospels from a post-Holocaust position, I bring to the text my experience of religious and racial persecution under Hitler's dictatorship and, being aware of possible oppressive influences, I adopt a critical attitude. Tracy holds that 'the Shoah exposes the need for a radical suspicion... of our Christian culture' (1994, 84), and that a hermeneutics of suspicion could identify distortions in our reception of the scriptures. The hermeneutical position is reinforced by the fact that, in interpreting the gospels, Christians now know that the original communities were influenced by events contemporary to the gospels (Tracey, ibid). The historical distance between the first-century and twentieth-century situations make a big difference in interpeting the anti-Jewish polemics of the New Testament, 'Jew' and 'Christian' then were not necessarily opposites (Marcus, 1993, 292). This means that the text has an integrity of its own and should not be manipulated (Isaacs in Evans, 1999, 70) and we should not project our own circumstances and beliefs into the biblical text.

> Our beliefs influence our reading of the Bible, just as our readi ng of the Bible influences our belief. This is true also of the stage before we read it, the translations that we read. (Robert Evans, 1999, 92).

Our reading of the gospels is influenced by the characters we know from western tradition. Stereotypes as Judas, the Jews, or the Pharisees are firmly fixed in our mind. The term Judas means to us 'one who betrays under the appearance of friendship, and pharisaic means hypocritical, self-righteous, sanctimonious (Oxford English Dictionary, 1989). The Good News Bible accentuates an anti-Jewish reading, since the illustrations in Matthew show a Pharisee as sanctimonious (6:2), as hypocritical (23:16), which made some fellow-Christians say that he looked 'crafty, cunning, shifty like Shylock', making a connection with Jews and usury and with Judas (26:15) who has become the prototype of the Jews. We have to remember, as seen in the trial scenes, that for the evangelists, it was easier to depict Jesus in conflict with the Jews than with the powerful Romans, and therefore, the reader should be aware of the sociopolitical tension of that time. Recent interpretations of the gospels, provide now a different view of Jews and Pharisees since, as we heard, Jesus is often called a Pharisee. It is, therefore, apposite that the WCC recommends that Christians should unlearn stereotyped images of Judaism (Gray, 1994, 11).

Important for this investigation is that the Matthean 'blood curse' has been amended in the Good News Bible, stating 'let the responsibility for his death fall on us and our children' (see 2.3.7). This difficult verse is now omitted from Roman Catholic lectionaries and was omitted in the Oberammergau Passion play. This raises the question whether difficult or offensive aspects of the scriptures can be removed. Kysar (1993, 125) does not think so. He is surely right in saying it does not resolve issues occasioned by the circumstances of historical origins. Discarding Beck's suggestion for a new translation every time a new theory was adopted as this would deceive lay readers and would create more difficulties, he holds Fuller's suggestion of careful teaching of the laity even more complicated than making historical critics out of lay readers. I hold that some texts might be omitted from Passion plays, not being literal representations, and sometimes from readings in church. But this does not resolve the problem because the texts are in the gospels. I think that readers would need guidance and should receive teaching and modern interpretations of the gospels. This remains a poignant problem, since Christian churches have acknowledged that there have been centuries of anti-Jewish teaching and simplistic biblical interpretation. Changes have come after the Holocaust, we turn to learn of some of these changes.

3.1.2 Anti-Judaism in church teaching, as seen in the interpretation of the Passion Narratives.

This section examines anti-Judaism in church teaching and in liturgy, and some of the recent changes which seek to combat anti-Jewish attitudes

The Holy Week liturgy is of particular interest to this paper because of anti-Jewish excesses in past history (see 1.3.1). In the Anglican church, the 1662 Good Friday prayer asked for 'mercy on all Jews, for their conversion, deliverance from ignorance'. The revised version of 1980 still had an anti-Jewish bias, praying for 'mercy on the Jews, who deny the faith of Christ crucified', whereas in 1984, prayers asked for 'God's ancient people the Jews, for greater understanding between Christian and Jew, for the removal of our blindness of heart, and to be faithful to God's covenant love'. The pre-Vatican II Good Friday prayer implored that the faithless and blind Jews be delivered from their darkness. The post-Vatican II asked that 'the Jewish people... may grow in faithfulness to his covenant... and may arrive at the fullness of redemption'.

The Holy Week liturgy still presents a challenge. Pawlikowski (1997, 17) thinks that efforts should go beyond a few changes in terminology or a few positive prayers for the Jews, and help congregations to understand the rootage of those events. The liturgy should be transformed, uniting Christians and Jews. He claims that this would be possible, if we asked not 'who crucified Jesus', but 'what crucified Jesus', the answer being that certain political forces crucified Jesus, namely the occupying powers aided and abetted by some Jewish leaders. Pawlikowski's thesis is that Jesus on Calvary symbolizes not only his own but also the sufferings which the Jews were experiencing in occupied Palestine. If we could better understand the concrete political dynamics that brought Jesus to his death, then we would begin a process that transforms Good Friday into a period of Christian-Jewish reconciliation.

Pawlikowski has outlined how churches have begun to revise lectionary readings, particularly when the Jewish people are seen in an unfavourable light. In the Passion narrative, for example, John's term 'the Jews' is emended to specify those involved, and changed to 'religious authorities' or 'the Jewish leaders'.

It is envisaged that in the churches regular prayers of repentance for sins against the Jews are to be said. The most public prayer was recently conducted under the glare of television cameras during the visit of Pope John Paul II to Israel. As the bent figure of the old Pontiff infront of the Western Wall prayed for forgiveness for past failings of the Church and for reconciliation, he placed a written supplication for sins committed between the old stones (see photo previous page). His humility and honest gesture seems to have advanced reconciliation between Christians and Jews.

There are still other problems. Despite the refutation of the charge of deicide, many hymns are anti-Judaic, expressing traditional Christology and Christian triumphalism. Some hymns give glory to Jesus Christ alone, forgetting the Father. Therefore, Bowden (Baybrook,

1990, 68) contends that although Jesus is the way to God, the figure of Jesus has come to eclipse that of God, separating Christians from Jews, as in this hymn:

> Lo, he comes with Clouds descending... God appears on earth to reign....
> Every eye shall now behold Him, robed in glorious majesty;
> Those who set at naught and sold Him, pierced and nailed Him to the Tree...
> Deeply wailing... shall their true Messiah see.

How problematic it is to find suitable Christian hymns for an ecumenical service with Jews, is discussed below (3.1.4).

How difficult it is to overcome anti-Jewish prejudice, was discovered in post-Holocaust Germany. It was found that German theologians, writing after 1945, had been trained in an environment hostile to Judaism and few were untainted by antisemitic Nazi propaganda. Therefore, in the 1970s, the protestant churches tried to rid themselves of centuries of anti-Jewish theology by affirming Jadaism's continued legitimacy.At most universities, students' dissertations now expose and repudiate aspects of Christian anti-Judaism (Ericksen, 1999, 21). During my visit to Germany, I found not only positive attitudes toward Judaism at the Kirchliche Hochschule in Wuppertal-Barmen, where visiting Jewish lecturers insure that theology students experience rabbinic teaching, but also a prevalent interest of the scholars in the reinterpretation of Christology (as seen below).

3.1.3 Anti-Judaism in western culture

Visual art is a powerful medium in evokaing anti-Judaism. Stained-glass windows in churches, murals, frescoes and sculptures depict the Jews often in a derogatory way. One of the scenes most widely depicted is the representation of Pilate's hand-washing which implicitly inculpates the Jews (see photo p 22). In art galleries, paintings are found that humiliate Jews, such as that by Hieronymus Bosch, depicting the Jews with repulsive features, hooked nose, and often wearing a star (see photo p 7). Illuminated Bibles and book illustrations also often humiliate and degrade the Jews depicted with distorted semitic features. Such pictures were used by the Nazis in their anti-Jewish propaganda. Scholefield (1997, 29), referring to Schreckenberg's *The Jews in Christian Art,* writes of the pain and anguish which the hundreds of illustrations produce.Scenes from the life of Jesus invariably depict the Jews as an object to be hated and detested and they are vilified as they are gleefully piercing the side of Jesus on the cross. Many of the paintings still form the background of Christian worship. Bowden (1996,33), therefore, emphasizes the need for Christians and Jews to identify such artifacts so that they can be made harmless.

I hold it useful to mention briefly the representation of the Jews in European literature, as the Jews are often caricatured, and, consciously or unconsciously, this affects our reading of the

gospel narratives. The Jews are perfidious (Pope), rebellious (Swift), ignorant (Voltaire), deceitful (Kant), poisoners (Marlowe). The predominant picture became the image of the Wandering Jew, the eternal fugitive for denying Christ. Some writers did advocate tolerance toward the Jews, such as Lessing's *Nathan der Weise*, or Cumberland *The Jew*, depicting the generous money lender, and Shakespeare's greedy Shylock has a human side. The recent reluctance of theatres to present the *Merchant of Venice* surely shows concern about presenting Jews. The more recent writing of Dickens' Fagin, who originally was presented on the screen as a malevolent, vicious character, was softened in later productions.

A change of attitude toward Jews can be seen in recent Passion plays. The Oberammergau Passion Play 2000 was reformed after twenty years of representations by bishops, theologians, biblical scholars and Jewish rabbis as villagers came to agree to changes being made to scenes and to characters that were offensive to non-Christians, and were sometimes even un-biblical. In the 1990 performance, demonic horns were omitted from priests' heads, as well as rabbi Archelaeus, the villain of the play. The villagers insisted on retaining the Matthean 'blood-curse' (27:25), which was shouted by 250 people, because 'we have always had that text and we intend to keep it in' (Eckert,1998, 12). The 2000 version, however, was to avoid all anti-Jewish allusions and this has largely, but not completely, been accomplished. Emphasis is now on the Jewishness of Jesus and on the Jewish community. The Menorah governs the table of Jesus' last Supper. Most important is that the Matthean 'blood-curse' has been removed. Pilate was to be portrayed as a venal governor and Caiaphas as a political pawn of Rome, a collaborator with the enemy. However, to the onlooker it seemed as if Pilate, an unassuming figure, was rather weak, whereas Caiaphas, with pompous outfit and impressive entourage, seemed the powerful man whose demands were complied with. What I found most disconcerting, were the crowd scenes in the Roman trial. About 250 people including children shouted, supposedly in two groups, 'the Nazarene must die... death to the false prophet... he shall die, die, die... and more than a dozen times the deafening howl resounded of 'crucify him'. These horrendous shouts, supported by the gesticulating crowd, gave the impression that it was, after all, the Jews who had caused Jesus' death. One could wish that in future plays improvements be made in this respect.

Some progress has also been made in other Passion plays. At Easter 2000, in the local Welsh Gregynog Passion Play, the Jewish crowd, depicted by about twenty players, shouted loudly for Jesus' crucifixion, but only one lone subdued voice muttered the Matthean 'blood curse'. Such a change, surely, augures well in reducing residual feelings of hatred against the Jews.

My next endeavour was to find out whether the gospels are now presented to young people in a way that prevents their forming a prejudicial opinion of the Jews. Therefore, I examined the Passion narratives in recent editions of English and German children's books. For want of

space, I can but report very briefly on my findings. In most books, offensive language has been removed. Only a small percentage spoke of 'many Jews, of Jewish teachers, and, for example, Küstenmacher showed a picture of a Jew in long black robe with distorted face and huge nose and mentioned that 'another Jew is to be sentenced to death' (1997), and Walter (1980) stated that Pilate was procurator 'im Judenland', a pejorative expression. Most other books as, for example, Batchelor's *Children's Bible (1998)* spoke of 'religious leaders, people, armed guards, others wrote that the people yelled, a screaming mob. Hastings *Children's Illustrated Bible (1988)* was informative with a map of Galilee and supplying geographical, historical and cultural information. In general, Roman soldiers were reported as beating Jesus. Pilate was presented favourably. Young readers, in empathy with Jesus and lamenting his tragic fate, could gain the impression that all the Jewish people and their leaders were opposed to Jesus, and thus the Jews could become in the mind of the reader the offenders who caused Jesus' death. Therefore, I agree with Evans (1999, 98) that some historical skills should be offered to children. It should be stressed, for example, that Jesus was a Jew, and that his disciples, all his followers and also the religious leaders were Jews. It should be made clear that only a small group of religious leaders for political reasons plotted Jesus' death together with the Roman occupying power, that the crucifixion was a Roman penalty and that the Romans crucified Jesus.

3.1.4 Christian-Jewish Dialogue and interpreting the Passion Narratives

Dialogue is to foster mutual understanding. It is through dialogue with Jews that the Holy Week Liturgy was transformed, argues Radcliffe (1997,19) and says that before an experience of Jewish-Christian dialogue he, like many Christians, did not realize that our attitudes towards and treatment of the Jews was corrupted. In dialogue, we reflect on issues that unite us or separate us, we come to accept each other's views, listen and learn and value each other, different thoughts or customs become familiar and are no longer frightening. A Christian-Jewish dialogue was first envisaged in 1942, at the height of genocide, when the Council of Christians and Jews was born in Britain to combat discrimination and prejudice. Schoneveld (in Fry, 1996, 155) reflecting on what Christians have learnt through fifty years of encounter with Jews and Judaism, argues that there are far-reaching implications for Christianity if it takes seriously the Jewishness of Jesus. For him, Jesus as a loyal Jew validates the Jewish way to God. The recognition of Jesus, the Jew, can provide the way forward for an acceptance of Judaism. He sees Jesus faithful to the Torah, one who had taken upon himself Jewish martyrdom in sanctification of God's name, and the resurrection of Jesus is the vindication of Jesus as a Jew. Similarly, Maybaum (Cohn-Sherbok, 1992, 231) asserts that Auschwitz is the analogue of Golgotha, seeing the Nazis as instruments of God's will', and Thoma claims that

> Auschwitz is the modern sign.. of oneness of the Jewish martyrs.. with the crucified Christ.. the Holocaust is thus..a sign of the unbreakable unity, founded upon Christ crucified, of Judaism and Christianity, inspite of all misunderstandings. (Cohn-Sherbok, 1992, 233).

Wohlmuth (1998) reminds us that there is no Jewish-Christian dialogue without overcoming the shadows of the past as, due to history, hardly any dialogue is as burdened as the Jewish-Christian one, and especially, if wished for by the Germans. The German Lutheran churches have been overwhelmed by their complicity, their *Mitschuld,* in the Holocaust, and feeling a moral need to make restitution to the Jewish people and combat any residual anti-Judaism. Therefore, I visited Germany to learn of the struggle of the Lutheran churches in seeking a renewal of Christian-Jewish relations. There were meetings, initially on a moral and political level, but after 1980, study groups were established. Some difficulties arose because of the small number of Jews now living in Germany, some Jews were not interested and new arrivals from Russia were ill equipped for a dialogue. However, about twenty percent of parishes started joint meetings, and some of the groups, joining the ICCJ, have established a Christian-Jewish dialogue.

Dialogues have resulted in participants developing respect and consideration for each other, and Christians have become aware of problems. When they now speak, for example, of the Messiah, of Pharisees, or of the Law, they are careful to express themselves in a way that might not be offensive to Jewish listeners. If there are to be ecumenical church services with Jewish participants, Christian hymns are chosen that are inoffensive, a task, I discovered, is not so easy, as in quite a number of hymns an anti-Jewish bias can be detected.

When in these meetings christological questions are raised, then these are too difficult to be answered, and scholars are asked to deal with the issue. One of the topics that was raised is of concern to this paper, as it deals with disputes regarding the guilt for Jesus' death. Conzelmann's summary of recent NT knowledge claims that crucifixion is a Roman and not a Jewish death penalty, and that Jewish complicity cannot be reliably derived from the Passion narratives. Kremers had expected scholars to acknowledge these facts. To his amazement, not a single Christian scholar has done so, on the contrary, many German exegetes have retrospectively connected Jesus' death to his polemics with the Pharisees (Rückkopplung), and so the Pharisees are held to be the chief culprits of Jesus' death (see 2.1.4). Since this anti-Jewish attitude, which Kremers considers unfounded, has been pervading popular literature, RE books, and sermons and is inciting hatred of the Jews, Kremers places some blame for this on Käsemann's erroneous interpretation and on his ignorance of the oral Thora' (1990, 94) (my translation). It seems regrettable that misunderstanding and misinterpretation can even nowadays rekindle anti-Judaism.

The Christian-Jewish dialogue at meetings in this country that captivated me most and is

relevant to this inquiry, was an exploration of Psalms. I gained much by reading Magonet's (1994, 101) interpretation of Psalm 22. For Christians, the opening verse, uttered by Jesus on the Cross (Mark 15:34) is awesome and terrifying:

> *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani ?*
> My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?

But with Magonet, this Psalm takes on a new perspective, and though it will always remain daunting, it seems no longer full of despair. In Magonet's perception, there is in the psalmist's forsakenness (v 1), the plea to God not to be far away (v 3, 12, 20), there is emphasis on the expression of trust in God (v 5,6,10), and finally, the recognition that the cry has been answered, and 'I will praise thee' (v 22). Although Moltmann (1995, 91) understands Jesus' cry from the cross as a call for God's faithfulness, his interpretation, dealing with christology, is different. I am attracted to Magonet's interpretation of this Psalm with its air of confidence. This makes me hope, completely unscientifically, that the whole Psalm might have been encapsuled in Jesus' brief cry on the cross. Thus, to be acquainted with Jewish interpretation of the scriptures can enrich us tremendously.

3.1.5 Summary

I have explored the tragic consequences of Christian misunderstanding of the scriptures and have outlined how the Christian affirmation of 'the Jews killed our Lord' resulted in centuries of persecution of the Jews. In this paper, which in its brevity could not hope to do justice to such a vast subject, I have sought to establish the thesis that anti-Judaism is not found in the Passion narratives, that traces of anti-Judaism in the text might be apparent but are not real, and that anti-Judaism derives from the notion of the Church Fathers and of later generations and rests on their interpretations and misinterpretations. It has become obvious that the Passion narratives are historically contingent literature presenting Jesus in his time and must be understood in its right setting and in its sociohistorical and political context. Then the text can be read in a way that is not anti-Jewish. This idea seems to be endorsed by many scholars who are now emphasizing the Jewishness of Jesus and the Jewishness of the gospel narratives. They are discerning similarities and are respecting differences, as Ben-Chorin (1992,11) says 'Der Glaube Jesu einigt uns, aber der Glaube an Jesus trennt uns'. We Christians can now walk with our elder brother in confidence and trust, looking to the future, in Küng's words:

> If we start out from Jesus of Nazareth as man and Jew, we shall be able to go a good part of the way together with unbiased Jews... And it may be that in the end of our journey together, Jesus will appear remarkably different from what the long Jewish-Christian disputes have led us to expect (in Fry,1996, 157).

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